



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 8

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AUG 07 2015

Ref: 8ENF

The Honorable Clement Frost, Chairman
Southern Ute Indian Tribe
P.O. Box 737
Ignacio, Colorado 81137-0737

Re: Animas River Sampling and Investigations on the Southern Ute Reservation

Dear Chairman Frost:

This letter provides you with notice of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) plans to conduct sampling and investigations in the Animas River on the Southern Ute Indian Reservation for the next several days related to the Gold King Mine release.

On August 5, 2015, EPA was conducting an investigation of the Gold King Mine. The intent of the investigation was to assess the on-going water releases from the mine and to assess the feasibility of further mine remediation. The plan was to excavate the loose material that had collapsed into the cave entry. During the excavation, the loose material gave way, opening the adit and spilling the large volume of water stored behind into Cement Creek, a tributary of the Animas River.

Initial estimates are that the release contained approximately one million gallons of water. The large pulse of water dissipated in about one hour. The adit is currently discharging lower flows and EPA is building settling ponds to contain and treat these flows. We expect conditions will continue to improve in the coming days.

Over the next several days, the EPA teams will be sampling and investigating downstream locations to confirm that the release has passed and poses no additional concerns for aquatic life or water users. EPA staff has been coordinating with Tom Johnson, Southern Ute Tribal Environmental Division Head, to identify sampling locations and to coordinate water quality data exchange.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact David Ostrander at (303) 312-6827, or Alfreda Mitre at (303) 312-6343.

Sincerely,

Shaun L. McGrath
Regional Administrator

cc: Thomas Johnson, Division Head, Southern Ute Environmental Program